

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-47. (Canceled)

48. (New) A content distribution management system for circulating a content via a network that includes a plurality of communication terminal devices operable to exchange the content on the network, a distribution management device operable to perform copyright management of the content and payment management concerning usage of the content, and a communication exchange device operable to provide information regarding the circulation of the content to the communication terminal device, the system comprising:

at least one communication terminal device that includes:

a content receiving unit operable to receive a content from another communication terminal device, the content being one of an un-circulated content which has not yet been circulated and a circulated content which has been circulated;

a purchase requesting unit operable to send, to said distribution management device, purchase requesting information for requesting purchase of the received content;

a rights information receiving unit operable to receive, from the distribution management device, rights information for enabling, under a certain rule, usage of the content which is requested to be purchased;

a search requesting unit operable to send information regarding a search to the communication exchange device, receive result information regarding a predetermined search item from the communication exchange device, and specify a content and a communication terminal device which is a distributor of the content based on the received result information;

a distribution requesting unit operable to send, to the specified communication terminal device which is the distributor of the content, information for requesting the sending of the specified content;

a content usage unit operable to use the content which is requested to be purchased according to the rights information received by the rights information receiving

unit;

a rule sending unit operable to send, to the distribution management device, a rule registration request for requesting registration of a usage rule of one of the un-circulated content and the circulated content, which is to be distributed; and

a redistributing unit operable to send the content received by the content receiving unit to another communication terminal device,

wherein the search requesting unit is operable to send a search condition to the communication exchange device, receive a predetermined search list from the communication exchange device, weight an attribute information indicating a characteristic of each of the content which is attached to the received search list, compare the content based on the attribute information, and specify a most weighted content and a communication terminal device which is a distributor of the most weighted content,

wherein the distribution requesting unit is operable to specify one of said communication terminal device that requests the sending of content and said another communication terminal device as a destination of the specified content, and send the requesting information to the specified communication terminal device, and

wherein the content usage unit further includes a usage request processing unit operable to send usage requesting information for requesting usage of a purchased content to the distribution management device, and receive usage licensing information for licensing the usage from the distribution management device, and the content using unit is operable to use the content based on the usage licensing information;

the communication exchange device includes:

a search responding unit operable to receive the information regarding the search from the communication terminal device, determine the result information regarding the search based on the received information, and send the result information to the communication terminal device sending the information regarding the search; and

the distribution management device includes:

a memory unit operable to store information regarding copyright management

information and payment management information such that the copyright management information and the payment management information are associated with individual content, the copyright management information including a number of rights representing how many times the content is usable under a certain rule, and the payment management information including payment information indicating one of a payment amount for each of the rights that are purchased and information indicating when the rights are not purchased;

a rights information sending unit operable to specify rights information according to one of the purchase requesting information received by the communication terminal device and the copyright management information that is specified based on the rule registration request, and send the specified rights information to a predetermined communication terminal device; and

a payment management processing unit operable to update the copyright management information and the payment management information based on one of the purchase requesting information and the rule registration request,

wherein said updating is performed by decreasing, by a number of rights which are purchased, the number of the rights in the memory unit regarding the content for which the purchase requesting information is sent, and registering, in the memory unit, payment information indicating the number of the rights which are purchased and the information indicating when the rights are not purchased, when the purchased content which is purchased according to the purchase requesting information, and the purchase requesting information is received from the communication terminal device, and

said updating is performed by updating the payment information in the memory unit regarding the content for which the rule registration request is sent, from the information indicating when the rights are not purchased, to the payment amount for each of the rights, when the rule registration request is received from the communication terminal device.

49. (New) A distribution management device used in a content distribution management system operable to circulate a content via a network, said content distribution management system including a plurality of communication terminal devices operable to exchange the content on the network, a distribution management device operable to perform copyright management of the content and payment management concerning usage of the content, and a communication exchange device operable to provide information regarding the circulation of the content to the communication terminal device, the distribution management device comprising:

 a memory unit operable to store copyright management information and payment management information such that the copyright management information and the payment management information are associated with individual content, the copyright management information including a number of rights representing how many times the content is usable under a certain rule, and the payment management information including payment information indicating one of a payment amount for each of the rights when the rights are purchased and information indicating when rights are not purchased;

 a rights information sending unit operable to specify rights information according to one of purchase requesting information received by the communication terminal device and the copyright management information that is specified based on a rule registration request, and send the specified rights information to a predetermined communication terminal device; and

 a payment management processing unit operable to update the copyright management information and the payment management information based on one of the purchase requesting information and the rule registration request,

 wherein said updating is performed by decreasing, by a number of rights which are purchased, the number of the rights in the memory unit regarding the content for which the purchase requesting information is sent, and registering, in the memory unit, payment information indicating the number of the rights which are purchased and the information indicating when the rights are not purchased, when the purchased content which is purchased according to the purchase requesting information, and the purchase requesting information is received from the communication terminal device, and

said updating is performed by updating the payment information in the memory unit regarding the content for which the rule registration request is sent, from the information indicating when the rights are not purchased, to the payment amount for each of the rights, when the rule registration request is received from the communication terminal device.

50. (New) A communication terminal device used in a content distribution management system operable to circulate a content via a network, said content distribution management system including a plurality of the communication terminal devices operable to exchange the content on the network, a distribution management device operable to perform copyright management of the content and payment management concerning usage of the content, and a communication exchange device operable to provide information regarding the circulation of the content to the communication terminal device, the communication terminal device comprising:

 a content receiving unit operable to receive a content from another communication terminal device, the content being one of an un-circulated content which has not yet been circulated and a circulated content which has been circulated;

 a purchase requesting unit operable to send purchase requesting information for requesting purchase of the received content to the distribution management device;

 a rights information receiving unit operable to receive, from the distribution management device, rights information for enabling, under a certain rule, usage of the content which is requested to be purchased;

 a search requesting unit operable to send information regarding a search to, the communication exchange device, receive result information regarding a predetermined search item from the communication exchange device, and specify a content and a communication terminal device which is a distributor of the content based on the received result information; and

 a distribution requesting unit operable to send, to the specified communication terminal device which is the distributor of the content, requesting information for requesting the sending of the specified content;

 a content usage unit operable to use the content which is requested to be purchased

according to the rights information received by the rights information receiving unit;

 a rule sending unit operable to send, to the distribution management device, a rule registration request for requesting registration of a usage rule of one of the un-circulated content and the circulated content which is to be distributed; and

 a redistributing unit operable to send the content received by the content receiving unit to another communication terminal device,

 wherein the search requesting unit is operable to send a search condition to the communication exchange device, receive a predetermined search list from the communication exchange device, weight an attribute information indicating a characteristic of each of the content which is attached to the received search list, compare the content based on the attribute information, and specify a most weighted content and a communication terminal device which is a distributor of the most weighted content, and

 wherein the distribution requesting unit is operable to specify one of a communication terminal device making the request to send content and another communication terminal device as a destination of the specified content, and send the sending requesting information to the specified device, and the content using unit further includes a usage request processing unit operable to send usage requesting information for requesting usage of a purchased content to the distribution management device, and receive usage licensing information for licensing the usage from the distribution management device, and the content using unit is operable to use the content based on the usage licensing information.

51. (New) A content distribution management method for managing distribution of a content, the method being used in a content distribution management system for circulating the content via a network, and said content distribution management system including a plurality of communication terminal devices operable to exchange the content on the network, a distribution management device operable to perform copyright management of the content and payment management concerning usage of the content, and a communication exchange device operable to provide information regarding the circulation of the content to the communication terminal

device, the distribution management device including a memory unit operable to store copyright management information and payment management information such that the copyright management information and payment management information are associated with individual content, the copyright management information including a number of rights representing how many times the content is usable under a certain rule, and the information regarding the payment management including payment information indicating one of a payment amount for each of the rights when the rights that are purchased and information indicating when the rights are not purchased, the method comprising:

by the communication terminal device:

receiving a content from another communication terminal device, the content being one of a un-circulated content which has not yet been circulated and a circulated content which has been circulated;

sending purchase requesting information for requesting purchase of the received content to the distribution management device;

receiving, from the distribution management device, rights information for enabling, under a certain rule, usage of the content which is requested to be purchased;

sending information regarding a search to the communication exchange device, receiving result information regarding a predetermined search item from the communication exchange device, and specifying a content and a communication terminal device which is a distributor of the content based on the received result information; and

sending, to the specified communication terminal device which is the distributor of the content, requesting information for requesting sending of the specified content;

using the content which is requested to be purchased according to the rights information received in the receiving of the rights information;

sending, to the distribution management device, a rule registration request for requesting registration of a usage rule of one of the un-circulated content and the circulated content, which is to be distributed; and

sending the content received in the receiving of the content to another

communication terminal device,

wherein the sending of the information regarding the search, the receiving of the result information, and the specifying the content and the distributor of the content are performed by sending a search condition to the communication exchange device, receiving a predetermined search list from the communication exchange device, weighting an attribute information indicating a characteristic of each of the content which is attached to the received search list, comparing the content based on the attribute information, and specifying a most weighted content and a communication terminal device which is a distributor of the most weighted content, and

wherein the sending of the requesting information is performed by specifying one of a communication terminal device making the request and another communication terminal device as a destination of the specified content, and sending the requesting information to the specified communication terminal device, and the using of the content further includes sending usage requesting information for requesting usage of a purchased content to the distribution management device, receiving usage licensing information for licensing the usage from the distribution management device, and using the content based on the usage licensing information;

by the communication exchange device:

receiving the information regarding the search from the communication terminal device, making the result information regarding the search based on the received information, and sending the result information to the communication terminal device that is the sender of the information regarding the search; and

by the distribution management device:

specifying rights information according to one of the purchase requesting information received by the communication terminal device and the copyright management information that is specified based on the rule registration request, and sending the specified rights information to a predetermined communication terminal device; and

updating the copyright management information and the payment management information based on one of the purchase requesting information and the rule registration request,

wherein said updating is performed by decreasing, by a number of rights which are purchased, the number of the rights in the memory unit regarding the content for which the purchase requesting information is sent, and registering, in the memory unit, payment information indicating the number of the rights which are purchased and the information indicating when the rights are not purchased, when the purchased content which is purchased according to the purchase requesting information, and the purchase requesting information is received from the communication terminal device, and

said updating is performed by updating the payment information in the memory unit regarding the content for which the rule registration request is sent, from the information indicating when the rights are not purchased, to the payment amount for each of the rights, when the rule registration request is received from the communication terminal device.

52. **(New)** A distribution management method for managing distribution, the method being used in a distribution management device in a content distribution management system for circulating a content via a network, said content distribution management system including a plurality of communication terminal devices operable to exchange the content on the network, the distribution management device operable to perform copyright management of the content and payment management concerning usage of the content, and a communication exchange device operable to provide information regarding the circulation of the content to the communication terminal device, the distribution management device including a memory unit operable to store copyright management information and payment management information such that the copyright management information and the payment management information are associated with individual content, the copyright management information including a number of rights representing how many times the content is usable under a certain rule, and the payment

management information including payment information indicating one of a payment amount for each of the rights when the rights indicated by the number of the rights are purchased and information indicating when the rights are not purchased, the method comprising:

by the distribution management device:

specifying rights information according to one of purchase requesting information received by the communication terminal device and the copyright management information that is specified based on a rule registration request, and sending the specified rights information to a predetermined communication terminal device; and

updating the information regarding the copyright management information and the payment management information based on one of the purchase requesting information and the rule registration request,

wherein said updating is performed by decreasing, by a number of rights which are purchased, the number of the rights in the memory unit regarding the content for which the purchase requesting information is sent, and registering, in the memory unit, payment information indicating the number of the rights which are purchased and the information indicating when the rights are not purchased, when the purchased content which is purchased according to the purchase requesting information, and the purchase requesting information is received from the communication terminal device, and

said updating is performed by updating the payment information in the memory unit regarding the content for which the rule registration request is sent, from the information indicating when the rights are not purchased, to the payment amount for each of the rights, when the rule registration request is received from the communication terminal device.